PEOPLE OF COLOR IN ALLIANCE
From Theory to Practice

by
Renee Miyuki Okamura

Submitted to the Department of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines why and how people of color form alliances across racial lines. Through books, articles, interviews and one case study, I have found that alliances are an important strategy in community development. By joining together in alliance, people of color pool their human and economic resources to achieve goals they would have difficulty reaching alone. In the process of building these alliances, people of color create and model pluralistic institutions. As they struggle towards their goals, allies develop mutual respect and understanding. They institutionalize their diversity by including and valuing a broad range of cultures, histories, experiences, and perspectives. They also share knowledge and teach each other skills that can later be used to further develop their separate communities.

Thesis Advisors: Mel King and Antonia Darder

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Chapter 1

A NECESSARY VISION

> We can counteract prejudicial behavior in a positive way. The experiences (people of color) share in common by living in America, and because we are all one, coalitions between groups that have been targets of racism must continue to be emphasized. I feel sadness when I see and read of the expressions of racism between groups that share a common historical experience. It is as if we are becoming more like those that have oppressed us.
>
> It is painful for us all when we are mistreated. Nothing is gained through cruelty and nothing is lost by sharing kindness, patience and understanding. If we accept that others deserve to be treated negatively, or that they are true to the stereotypes that have unfortunately been leveled against them, we then become the oppressor. We can only stop this by becoming a part of the solution and decide not to be a part of the problem.
>
> By joining forces as a people, we can make this world a wonderful place for all our children. This may sound idealistic to some, but it is the only reality that has meaning for us all.
>
> . . . The greatest expression of our intellect is manifested in the humility of our understanding and working towards a society that embraces our differences.
>
> Gerald R. Davis, Letter to the Editor
> Asian Week, 4/26/91

I began looking into alliances formed by people of color across racial lines because, as a Japanese American, an Asian American, and a person of color, I care about the relations between us. As people of color in the United States, we all experience racial discrimination. This discrimination limits each person's and each

community's opportunities for economic advancement. It hurts me to see people of color divided, resenting and fighting each other over the limited opportunities we have between us.

I believe we must move away from the self-destructive behavior of insulting, harassing, boycotting, even killing each other. We need to consciously improve our personal relations and create opportunities to come together and exert our energy in constructive ways. We need to unite to demand or create new opportunities for each of us, all of us. And we need to show others that pluralism is possible, that we can benefit from living and working together in ways that include us all, rather than exclude some to the advantage of others. Alliances are one way to do this.

Alliances are organizations that are founded on principles as well as long-term goals. They are about building institutions to achieve common goals in ways that include and value each of our distinct cultures and histories. They are opportunities for people of color to act in unity without sacrificing their diversity.

Alliances are also an important strategy for community development. In Mel King's definition, a community is developed when it is able to meet its own needs and achieve diversity.

> **Community development** must lean heavily on **human development** -- the most natural ingredient for developing the best possible resources in a community are the people themselves. It is not the physical structures, or the dollar signs that count in the end, but the way people feel about themselves, each other and the place they live.

> Using a people-oriented definition of development, a community becomes more developed as it becomes more diverse, incorporating more cultural and ethnic traditions, and developing the skills and confidence to solve their own problems.[1]

Alliances can move people and communities of color towards both of these goals. By joining together, people of color can pool their human and economic resources to create diverse and pluralistic institutions to meet each of their needs.

This thesis documents my quest to learn more about alliances, to move beyond my idealistic vision of alliances to state a realistic definition.

Methodology

Most of my research consisted of interviews with people of color who have experience in alliances formed across racial lines. There are books written about military alliances, and there are books written about race relations between African Americans and whites. I was not able to find any books about relations, much less alliances, between people of color in the United States. I did find one essay and a couple of relevant chapters in different books that discussed either alliances or relations between people of color. I refer to these writings to the extent that they were relevant. For the most part, I relied on the wisdom and experience of my

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[1] Mel King, Chain of Change, page 234.

interviewees.

In the spring of 1991, I got on the phone, on the bus and the train to find people of color who could tell me more about alliances. I asked them why and how people of color can form alliances across racial lines. I discovered a lot of theories in people's heads, and I began to collect and synthesize these with what I found written in articles and books.

I also studied one organization in depth: Third World Jobs Clearing House in Boston, Massachusetts. Third World was an alliance of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans who united to get more jobs for construction workers of color. I interviewed Board and staff members in the organization to find out why they joined the alliance, and how it worked.

Finally, I sat down at the computer to chronicle what I had heard and read. In Chapter 2, I gather and explain the reasons why people of color should form alliances across racial lines, and describe what is required before people of color can come together. After talking to different people, I realized that there were two ways of thinking about how to work together. I pieced together the two perspectives and considered their relationship to each other in Chapter 3. In order to check the theory with practice, I present people's insights from their experiences at Third World Jobs Clearing House in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I outline what I learned about alliances.

Chapter 2

UNDERSTANDING ALLIANCES

In order to understand and begin to define alliances, I interviewed and reviewed writings by and about several people of color who have experience working across racial lines. I wanted to know why they believe it is important for people of color to work across racial lines, and what suggestions they have for how we can work together.

Following are brief introductions and descriptions of my sources.

Leo Fletcher is one of the founders of United Community Construction Workers (UCCW), a militant, socialist organization of African American men from the communities of color in Boston (South End, Roxbury, North Dorchester, Mattapan). UCCW originated the concept for the Third World Jobs Clearing House, a secondary hiring hall operated by and for construction workers of color. Leo participated at the Board level off and on during the Third World's first year (1975-76).

Hubie Jones is a longtime advocate for youth, particularly in Boston's public schools. He has directed the Roxbury Multiservice Center, and the Community Fellows Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is currently the Dean of Boston University's School of Social Welfare. His views were gathered from a cassette tape recording of his "Building Alliances and Coalitions" speech at the Youth Leadership Conference, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, January 1990.

Mel King began his career working with youth in the racially and ethnically diverse South End neighborhood of Boston. He went on to direct Boston's New Urban League, serve two terms as an elected representative to the Massachusetts State House, write a book about the

development of Boston's African American community (Chain of Change, 1981), and found the Rainbow Coalition for his 1983 mayoral campaign. He is currently Director of the Community Fellows Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

May Louie is Executive Assistant to Jesse Jackson in the National Rainbow Coalition. In the 1970s, she organized Chinese parents around the provision of bilingual services during school desegregation, and helped found the Chinese Progressive Association in Boston Chinatown. In the 1980s she worked towards district elections in Boston, Mel King's mayoral campaign, the Boston Rainbow Coalition, and Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns. She joined the staff of the National Rainbow Coalition in 1988.

Papusa Molina belongs to the Women Against Racism Committee in Iowa City. The multi-racial group's purpose is to "educate ourselves and others about racism." It has been conducting anti-racism workshops and conferences since 1982. I read about her Committee experiences in her essay "Recognizing, Accepting and Celebrating Our Differences" (1990).

I also will occasionally refer to points that Barbara Sizemore makes in her essay, "Separatism: A Reality Approach to Inclusion?" (1969), and Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton make in Chapter 3, "The Myths of Coalition", in their book, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (1967). Barbara Sizemore, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton write specifically about African Americans and their relationships with whites. I include their views because I believe that some of the ideas they present apply to other communities of color and to our relations to any other racial group, whether it be another community of color or a white community. I also believe the points they made over twenty years ago are still applicable today.

All my sources agree that expediency is the fundamental reason why people

of color should work across racial lines. They also stress that communities of color must separately undertake serious education and organizing efforts before joining together in alliance. Communities of color cannot work constructively with each other until each of one knows who it is, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and what it needs. Their perspectives diverge when it comes to deciding how long we should work together.

This chapter presents their areas of agreement. Chapter 3 explains where their perspectives diverge. All quotes and paraphrases in the following two chapters are from interviews with Leo Fletcher, Mel King and May Louie; a recording of Hubie Jones' speech; and reading of the articles and books mentioned.

Expediency

Expediency refers to the strategy best suited for the goals we seek to achieve. My sources believe that our best strategy to win more political and economic resources for each of our communities is to cross racial lines and take collective action.

They believe that as people of color, we can get more for each of our communities by working together than we can get by working alone. They have two reasons for saying this. First, they note that if we pool our resources we

increase our ability to win a bigger piece of the political or economic pie, so we can all have more than we had before.

> **May Louie:** (on why people of color should work across racial lines) None of us has enough numbers.
>
> **Mel King:** The Rainbow (Coalition) . . . created a recognition that we needed each other. Singularly we could not reach goals of our individual organizations. The reality approach is to maximize both our power and concern.
>
> Given the nature of the structures we live under, pooling our political, economic and intellectual resources gives us an opportunity to transform this culture.[1]

The second reason is that by joining together, we defy divide and conquer strategies. When we battle each other over the pie crumbs, we weaken each other. We leave the people who control the pie to keep on hoarding it as much as they want. They can sit back and get fat off the pie, while we beat each other up. My sources agree that it is wiser for people of color to unite to go after our common enemy, the pie-keeper.

> **Hubie Jones:** . . . most folks in power believe that they can find strategies to divide us. To pull one group away from the other and keep us in a competitive, conflictual situation. Alliances allow us to work out our common, collective objectives, work out whatever differences we have. We will not allow people who we are after, who should concede, to divide us, to coopt us in a variety of ways.
>
> **Mel King:** Our history ought to tell us that if those in power can deal with us one by one, issue by issue, they can play one off against another.

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[1] Where not otherwise noted, quotes from Mel King are from my interview with him on 3/13/91. Quotes followed by a page number in parenthesis are from his book, Chain of Change (1981).

> If we share the vision about what is possible and what we want to see in our country and our community, we can work in unity as a community, resisting the isolation and separation that makes us vulnerable. (p. 249)

By employing this strategy of unity, we can attain goals we would have difficulty attaining alone. Hubie Jones notes that when we pool our resources, we gain collective strength, expand our sphere of influence, spread risks and increase our ability to take sustained action. He says that our mobilization, combined with effective action, can focus public attention on a previously ignored issue, elevating it to the level of a societal problem that receives wide-spread attention and demands a solution.

My sources emphasize that it is necessary and appropriate for us to work across racial lines, but they never imply that it is quick or easy to do so. They are quick to admit that it requires patience and a lot of hard work. And they agree that each community must separately develop, achieving some measure of self-determination before coming together in alliance.

> I have persisted in my sense that the black struggle for freedom is at its hear a profoundly human quest for transformation, a constantly evolving movement toward personal integrity and toward new social structures filled with justice, equity, and compassion. Though it has often seemed to be a restricted political, economic, or racial struggle, it has always tried to help men and women discover their tremendous capacities as individuals and as members of an empowering community. Thus at its deepest levels the river moves toward a freedom that liberates the whole person and humanizes the entire society, pressing us beyond the boundaries of race, class, and nationality that serve temporarily,

necessarily, as our organizing, stabilizing bases.[2]

Education

There is a mural on a wall by the Dudley Street Station in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. At the center of the painting Moses stands holding two tablets, one in each hand. One tablet says "UNITE", the other says "EDUCATE". Like the artist, my sources believe that unity and education go hand in hand.

My sources stress the necessity of teaching people of color in our own communities to realize their importance and power, both at the individual and the community level. They note that the people in our communities won't move to action until they believe they deserve better. This education begins with teaching people in our communities to develop pride in their own history and culture. This is essential because as people of color we are systematically excluded from educational curriculum and taught to judge ourselves by standards that are not our own. We have to learn our histories and practice our spiritual beliefs, languages, cultural norms, and traditions with pride. We need to value our own cultures and

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[2] Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America, Vintage Press, New York, 1983, p. xxiv.

histories.

> **Mel King:** One side of the equation is that people have to see their own authenticity and really value themselves. The other side of the equation is that once you do that you begin to change the oppressor's perception of you, which causes the oppressor a problem because they have to change their perception of themselves.
>
> **Leo Fletcher:** We're afraid of something, of how those in control will respond. So we pay homage instead of getting angry, taking what is mine. African Americans used to be considered 3/5 human. It's not like that anymore.

This is an essential process of moving from self-hatred to self-love. We have to stop being ashamed of who we are before we can assert ourselves.

One step beyond this is a painful lesson in institutionalized racism. The reason why we have to go through a process of learning who we are is that the people and institutions we have looked up to all our lives have been prejudicing us with lies about ourselves and other people of color. They have robbed us of our self-worth by trying to get us to be like them, and not accepting us for who we are.

> **Papusa Molina:** We have to dare to question the myths and misinformations transmitted to us by the main actors in charge of the superstructures of society. We need to challenge the teachings of our parents, religious leaders, educators, politicians and to increase our ability to respond with an ever clearer sense of who we are, how our prejudices get reinforced and how we create institutions to enact our collective prejudices. Understanding personal and institutional power becomes, then, the main task in the process of liberation and in this revolution where allies are struggling for life and not for death. (p. 331)

Once we understand all this, there is no turning back. It is empowering to

know that we our experiences are important, that we deserve to be treated with respect and equality. We only need opportunities to take action.

> **Leo Fletcher:** Once things change in people's minds, they never change. You can never change their minds again. You have to oppress them in new and different ways. Things are never the same. Eventually we will be at a level of consciousness to do things to change the repressive government. . . I'm dangerous because I'm past belief -- **I know.**

This education is required before people join alliances. It is required to psychologically empower each of our communities, so that each community knows its own identity, and the strengths it derives from its identity.

From this point, each community can define its own interests and determine whether an alliance is the most appropriate way to reach a particular goal. No community gains from working with another until it has derived strength from within and clearly defined its interests.

> **Hubie Jones:** Understand what your strengths are to lend to the coalition or alliance. You shouldn't be in one if you don't have any -- or you will be used and abused.

Grassroots Organizing

Education's companion is grassroots organizing. Education empowers individuals in our communities, but organizing efforts are required to maximize our

power, to consolidate the human resources in each of our communities. May Louie emphasizes that "we need equivalent organizing efforts in each of our communities", particularly when our communities join to take collective action. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton stress that organizing must happen before alliances are built.

> **Stokely Carmichael & Charles Hamilton:** Let black people organize themselves **first**, define their interests and goals, and then see what kinds of allies are available. Let any ghetto group contemplating coalition be so tightly organized, so strong, that -- in the words of Saul Alinsky -- it is an "indigestible body" which cannot be absorbed or swallowed up. . . . Black power simply says: enter coalitions only **after** you are able to "stand on your own". (pp. 80-81)

Leo Fletcher and May Louie add that broad-based, grassroots organizing is essential to ensure our organizations are representative, and to maximize the strength of our human resources. They warn us of the danger of limiting our efforts to a tiny circle of fellow activists, and of failing to organize, listen to and identify with the people in the communities we claim to represent.

> **Leo Fletcher:** When you don't organize people on a broad base, you are suspect. . . you are not representative, cannot speak for the people because you are not the people.
>
> **May Louie:** Coalitions can't just exist at the activist level. They are not a substitute for grassroots organizing. Without the grassroots, we are not coalescing. Weak community organizing leads to weak coalition building.

Separatism and Pluralism

> **Mel King:** Separation is required in those early stages, as each group steps back to view its own identity, and to identify its purpose and goals. (p. 260)

This focus on separately educating and organizing our communities is a necessary stage in moving towards pluralism. According to Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, separatism is required in a pluralistic society.

> **Stokely Carmichael & Charles Hamilton:** . . . group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society. (p. 65)

Barbara Sizemore theorizes that "separatism is a normal step up the sociological ladder to full participation in society." (p. 261) She describes a five stage "power inclusion model" where excluded groups, like communities of color, move from Separatist and Nationalist stages, through stages of Capitalism and Pluralism to Egalitarianism. In the first two stages a group develops its own identity and cohesion, in the third and fourth stages the group develops its own economic and political power, and in the final stage it has summoned enough power from within to participate equally with other groups in society. (I use the term "pluralism" to refer to the final stage that Barbara Sizemore describes.) At every stage, the group maintains its distinct cultural identity.

In Chain of Change, Mel King outlines three stages of community

development: Service, Organizing, and Institution Building. He calls these three stages the "steps toward the process of community development which will integrate our lives in all the possible human and political dimensions -- individual, family, community, city-wide, state, national, global, universal." (p. xxviii) At first a community realizes it deserves better and demands for more services from existing institutions; eventually it realizes its ability to serve itself and develops the skills to do so; and finally, in the Institution Building stage, the community develops its own alternative institutions to serve its specific needs. In this last stage, the community exercises its power and begins to make connections with other communities.

> **Mel King:** Most importantly, the late seventies were a time when we began to make links with other groups. Our consciousness and perspective broadened and led us to recognize the importance of forging links with groups engaged in struggles qualitatively similar to our own. We were determined to offer mutual support and protection during the battles ahead to preserve the gains we had made and to insist on further changes as we continued to struggle to transform our city. (p. xxviii)

These alliances are an important strategy to deal with larger issues and enhance the power each community has.

The challenge is to determine **how** to form alliances after we have been concentrating on developing our separate communities. My sources disagree on how different communities of color should come together once they have attained some measure of self-determination. Their perspectives diverge into two broad

categories. I outline and analyze the relationship between these two perspectives in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

RECONCILING TWO PERSPECTIVES
ALLIANCES and COALITIONS

My sources disagree on whether people of color should form temporary or lasting organizations. One group of people believes that our work must be rooted in our individual racial and ethnic communities, and we should only cross racial lines briefly in order to formulate strategies and collaborate in taking specific actions. As soon as we achieve our shared goals, it is our duty to return to developing our individual communities. The other group believes in developing their individual communities, as well as in creating opportunities for us to cross racial lines to begin developing a pluralistic, larger community of color. This group strives to work together in ways that include and value each of us, and believes one of our responsibilities is to build long-term institutions to model this vision of cultural pluralism.

Papusa Molina uses the term "coalition" to refer to the first group's approach, and "alliance" to refer to the second. She writes that both approaches are important, but coalitions are better suited for achieving short-term goals, while alliances are more appropriate for building institutions.

> **Papusa Molina:** Coalitions are necessary as long as we keep in mind that they are temporary, formed with specific goals in mind, and they

> need to be disbanded as soon as the objective is achieved. Alliances, on the other hand, are about individuals, they are about love, they are about commitment and they are about responsibility. They are about concrete manifestations of our rebellious spirits and our sense of justice. They are about shared visions of a better society for us all. (p. 329)

My other sources use the terms coalition and alliance interchangeably to describe the voluntary, action-oriented groups we form across racial lines. This is problematic when they use the same terms to describe different ways of coming together.

I found Papusa Molina's distinctions useful and appropriate to describe the two different approaches I read about and heard. In this chapter, I borrow her framework to present the two approaches as objectively as possible. I conclude by examining the relationship between the two approaches.

COALITION \ko-e-'lish-en\ **noun**
Voluntary, temporary organization of autonomous groups and individuals committed to acting on a specific and tangible goal.

Hubie Jones and Leo Fletcher believe in coalitions. They see people of color coming together to strategize and take specific, collective action within a

clear time-frame.

> **Leo Fletcher:** We must network and communicate on a regular basis around areas of concern. We need to put a timetable on strategies, goals, objectives, outcomes.

A coalition is temporary because its members believe in the importance of developing their autonomous communities. Coalition members share a specific goal, but their vision or mission lies with their individual communities. They join together long enough to take collective action that each of their communities can benefit from. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton emphasize the importance of each coalition member having his[1] own clearly defined interests.

> **Stokely Carmichael & Charles Hamilton:** Viable coalitions therefore stem from four preconditions: (a) the recognition by the parties involved of their respective self-interests; (b) the mutual belief that each party stands to benefit in terms of that self-interest from allying with the other or others; (c) the acceptance of the fact that each party has its own independent base of power and does not depend for ultimate decision-making on a force outside itself; and (d) the realization that the coalition deals with specific and identifiable -- as opposed to general and vague -- goals. (pp. 79-80)

Coalition members remain in the coalition only as long as they are getting what they need for themselves and their own communities. Once these goals are met, coalition members return to work in their separate communities.

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[1] I use male pronouns because I only heard the coalition perspective being articulated by men. I am not sure if women also think this way when they take collective action across racial lines.

A coalition is also temporary because its members are concerned about compromise. Hubie Jones says that coalition members are nervous about the "boundaries of different groups coming together and blurring." They worry about being diverted from their original mission, about sacrificing their autonomy, and about losing their integrity. For this reason, he finds that coalitions can exist only "as long as you are working on particular kinds of objectives and actions that require folks to be together."

Hubie Jones does note that some coalitions fail to dissolve naturally once their goals are met. He considers it problematic when coalition members don't "go back to their own organizational work." He warns us against staying in coalitions for too long.

> **Hubie Jones:** I have seen too many situations where people stay together too long then they get into counterproductive struggles because there ain't no work to do anyway. Well you know when you're successful and things happen, you say well hey, let's keep it together. Well there ain't no reason to keep it together until you can really find another reason to move together.

According to these guidelines, a coalition functions as a working committee of people of color with a common goal or task. Coalition members need not identify with each other, and may even have very different interests and ultimate objectives. They recognize these differences, but choose to set them aside in the short-term. They minimize their differences in order to focus on achieving their immediate, common objective.

Coalitions are not about building institutions. Coalitions are short-term, action-oriented groups. Coalitions take actions that push existing institutions to change. Coalition members believe that people of color should create new or alternative institutions separately in order to best serve the specialized needs of their distinct communities.

Coalitions are effective to take specific action, like marching on the Capitol, electing a political candidate or pushing for mutually beneficial legislation. As noted in Chapter 2, a coalition strategy brings different communities of color together to mobilize their power and resources, and sustain action that a single community would have difficulty achieving alone. They provide opportunities for communities of color to take collective action to meet their separate interests, without compromising their individual interests.

A side benefit of coalitions is that they develop important new relations between people and communities of color. When we join together in coalition, we form new networks with other people of color. The networks remain, ready for reactivation when needed, long after our coalition work is done.

ALLIANCE \e-'li-en(t)s\ **noun**
Voluntary, long-term organization of individuals and groups with a shared vision and commitment to developing pluralistic institutions.

Mel King, May Louie and Papusa Molina advocate for alliances. They see people of color coming together around a shared vision of a pluralistic society. They embrace the concept of pluralism because they believe that each of us deserves respect and personal freedom, and that if we want this for ourselves, we have to want this for each other, too.

> **Mel King:** Rosa Parks sat down in the front of the bus because she believed she deserved to. She was saying she was deserving, but she did not say other people didn't deserve the same treatment, too.
>
> **Papusa Molina:** (Alliances) are about shared visions of a better society for us all. (p. 329)
>
> **May Louie:** If we want a society where we can be unrestricted, where our children are not harassed, where each of us can live freely -- if we want this for ourselves, we have to want it for everybody -- otherwise this vision is meaningless. It won't exist like that for all of us.

According to their definition, alliances must be pluralistic.

Alliances endure because they are founded on a pluralistic vision, as well as on long-term goals. This vision is based on values like diversity, equality, personal freedom, and democracy. Allies acknowledge and appreciate that each of our communities is different. They choose to celebrate that diversity. They hold

up democratic principles of representation and participation because they value input from each of our communities. They recognize their vision of pluralism and personal freedom is false without liberty and equality for us all.

Over twenty years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. cautioned us against uniting with people who have similar goals, but a different "outlook".

> **Martin Luther King, Jr.:** For an alliance to have permanence and loyal commitment from its various elements, each of them must have a goal from which it benefits and none must have an outlook in basic conflict with the others. . . . Some churches recognize that to be relevant in moral life they must make equality an imperative. With them the basis for alliance is strong and enduring. But toward those churches that shun and evade the issue, that are mute or timorous on social and economic questions, we are no better than strangers even though we sing the same hymns in worship of the same God.[2]

The alliances that Mel King, May Louie and Papusa Molina describe avoid this mistake. Papusa Molina recalls how the Women Against Racism Committee formulated its vision at a conference in 1989. The creation of this collective vision was a crucial step in the Committee's evolution from a coalition to an alliance.

> **Papusa Molina:** At the end of four days, 150 volunteers and the 30 committee members were exhausted but confident that a new vision had been created: that in order to dismantle the socio-political and economic structures of oppression, we needed to form alliances with very specific characteristics; we needed to make into reality the old adage that the "political is personal and the personal is political"; and we needed to dismantle -- as Angela Davis reminded us -- white people's organizations and recreate them with diversity at their core and people of color as their

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[2] Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, Beacon Press, Boston, 1967, p. 151.

leaders. (pp. 328-329)

May Louie says we need to join around "principles". Mel King writes about the necessity of allies sharing a democratic vision.

> **Mel King:** Alliances can sometimes be built around common problems and issues which require common action; but we also need to be clear about the underlying, common commitment to internal democracy and citizen involvement, and a common resistance to racism, sexism, classism and exploitation. (p.250)

Original goals can be achieved and new ones set, but the alliance is worth maintaining as long as its members share basic values and vision.

Alliances that are true to these values and the pluralistic vision provide opportunities for people of color to work across racial lines in ways that include and value each of our distinct cultures and histories. Diversity and pluralism imply that we are different. Allies recognize these differences, and insist on finding ways to celebrate rather than exploit or minimize our differences.

> **Mel King:** We are different. We have different experiences. (Our experiences) have a lot of meaning for us. We ought to celebrate, lift them up.
>
> **Papusa Molina:** In the Women Against Racism Committee we say: "It is our refusal to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences that keeps us apart." (p. 330)

They emphasize our different cultures and histories are a basis for understanding and enrichment.

These alliances take time and a lot of hard work to develop. Developing an alliance is a difficult process that begins with the individual. Papusa Molina writes that we must be able to see "every human being -- including ourselves -- as victims and perpetrators of oppression." (p. 330) Allies recognize they have cultural differences and stereotypes of each other that interfere with their understanding of each other. They move beyond these misperceptions through honest and open communication and ongoing, mutual education. They take the time to teach and learn about each others histories, spiritual beliefs, cultural norms, traditions, languages and food.

Internal struggle is an inherent part of this process. Allies recognize that struggle is required to develop understanding, respect and trust in the midst of diversity.

> **Mel King:** The alliance will fall apart if people are unwilling to struggle through the issues which divide as well as come together over those items which naturally unite us.
>
> My vision is based on the belief that people are willing to go through the difficulties of confrontation because we know, from experience, that being honest supports learning, growth, and liberation based on humane values. (p. 233)

> **May Louie:** In the process of working out our differences, disagreements, I hope we can get better, get to be something better, more than we were before.

Allies invest the time and energy to work our their differences because of their shared vision and commitment to each other.

Alliances are about creating and modeling new institutions. They offer an alternative to the racist institutions that exclude or seek to assimilate people of color into the dominant culture and society. Allies seek to bring together our distinct racial and ethnic communities to create pluralistic institutions, and build a larger, inclusionary community of color. Mel King talks about modeling the correct behavior, so that, like the song in the play Dream Girls, "they will want to feel as good as we." Alliances prove that pluralism is possible. They stand as shining examples of how we can create institutions to include and value each of our communities.

Alliances are effective for creating new institutions. Each of our communities may not have the human, economic and political resources it takes to create the institutions we need. Alliances are opportunities for communities of color to pool their resources, and create pluralistic institutions that include and respond to all of our needs.

As a fringe benefit, alliances improve relations between people and communities of color. Allies join together around shared values and a pluralistic vision. Their vision leads them to acknowledge our differences, and make a commitment to understanding each other. They invest time and energy to understand and eventually celebrate each other.

The Evolution From Coalitions to Alliances

Papusa Molina writes about the Women Against Racism Committee that "It seemed that at some intuitive level we knew that our survival on this planet depended on our ability to go beyond coalitions and form alliances." (p. 327) She is saying that, in her experience, coalitions can evolve into alliances. I think she is right.

Historically, I suspect that the alliance perspective presented here may have emerged out of people's experiences with coalitions in the sixties. In 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton wrote of the dangers of coalitions in their books. They had discovered that coalitions founded on goals alone were hardly worthwhile.

> **Stokely Carmichael & Charles Hamilton:** We do not believe it is possible to form meaningful coalitions unless both or all parties are not only willing but believe it absolutely necessary to challenge Anglo-conformity and other prevailing norms and institutions. Most liberal groups with which we are familiar are not willing at this time. If that is the case, then the coalition is doomed to frustration and failure. (p. 62)
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> **Martin Luther King, Jr.:** Most unions have mutual interests with us; both can profit in the relationship. Yet with some unions that persist in discrimination to retain their monopoly of jobs we have no common ground. To talk of alliances with them is to talk of mutual deception and mutual hypocrisy.[3]

The coalitions they witnessed did mobilize people of color and whites to make

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[3] Ibid.

incremental changes, but these coalitions were never about changing the existing structure of institutions, or about granting control to people of color. The lesson they pass on to us is that as long as we coalesce with people whose values and vision are in conflict with our own, we can hardly expect to make substantial changes to improve our situation in society.

The alliances people write and talk about today may have evolved out of their disappointment with the coalitions of the sixties. Alliances are basically coalitions with the addition of principles and vision. They are not about changing existing institutions, but about creating new, alternative institutions. According to Mel King's stages of community development, communities move from demanding change from existing institutions to developing their own institutions to meet their needs. This corresponds with a shift from forming coalitions that push for change, to alliances that build new institutions. Alliances merge the imperative to join around principles as well as goals, and the shift in strategy to creating our own institutions.

While alliances may be a more principled strategy for social change, I believe that alliances have not completely replaced coalitions because there is still a need for temporary goal-oriented organizations. There are three reasons why we may choose a coalition strategy over an alliance.

First, some of the actions we take are short-term, and not about building institutions. For example, legislative or electoral actions have specific time-frames.

Coalitions can mobilize large voting constituencies for immediate action. Those of us who have learned from the sixties and seventies may be more selective about who we coalesce with, making sure that our principles are in line with each other. Still, once the legislation or candidate has been voted on, there is no pressing reason to stay together.

Second, even though we may share principles and a vision, we may have other responsibilities and commitments. We may have families to care for. We may be dividing our time between several organizations that work towards realizing our vision. If the coalition or alliance is voluntary and without a budget for salaries, we will need to put some of our time into working for paychecks to pay the bills. These or any other external commitments can keep us from investing the time required to build the ideal alliance.

May Louie has suggested that voluntary organizations that focus on electoral politics, like the Rainbow Coalition, normally expand and contract.[4] This is because people make personal sacrifices during political campaigns. They put their relationships, families, and careers on hold temporarily. Most people cannot maintain such a high level of excitement, commitment and sacrifice over the long term. As soon as the election is over, they need to return to their families and

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[4] Vicki Meredith, one of my classmates, also sees organizations expanding and contracting. She says that every organization has a certain number of "supporters" who come and go, contributing their energy and resources when they are able to.

jobs. They may return to work on the next election. Only a small group of people can afford to remain and maintain an alliance between elections.

Third, a coalition strategy may be required as an interim step to get to alliances. As individuals, coalitions may be a stage we need to go through before we can begin to think about alliances. Our perception of what is possible is shaped by our personal experiences. Those of us who have grown up in segregated communities, and worked in segregated jobs may have difficulty buying into the idea of forming long-term alliances with people and communities we are not familiar with. We may be wary of crossing racial lines, especially for a lengthy term, without precedent. We need to know that other people have done so successfully, and we need to experience some of that success ourselves. Temporary coalitions allow us opportunities to learn about and work with people from other communities of color, with the comfort of returning to our segregated communities.

Those people who talk about alliances already have had rewarding experiences living or working with other people of color. Mel King grew up in the racially and ethnically diverse South End neighborhood of Boston. He has fond memories of visiting each others churches for Easter and Passover. In talking about the South End, he says, "Everyone who comes out of that neighborhood feels that they're special for growing in that diversity." In the sixties, May Louie watched the civil rights movement on television and began to realize that the

experiences of African Americans in many ways paralleled those of Asian Americans. At Brandeis University, she found herself agreeing with the African American students' demands for increased faculty representation and new curriculum responsive to their experiences. She also discovered that the Asian American experience is closely linked to the Latino experience. Both Asian and Latino students at Brandeis were small in numbers and closer to the immigrant experience. She ended up joining the sector of the Asian American Movement that was close to Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and the Young Lords Party.

Chapter 4

LESSONS FROM ONE ALLIANCE
Third World Jobs Clearing House

In order to find out how the theory relates to practice, I looked into one alliance: Third World Jobs Clearing House, more simply known as "Third World". Third World was one of the first institutions developed across racial lines by people of color in Boston, Massachusetts. It was a secondary hiring hall operated by and for workers of color seeking union and non-union work in the construction trades. Third World opened in 1975, but due to political opposition and funding cutbacks, closed its doors in 1985.

I chose Third World Jobs Clearing House for its unique decision-making structure. Before the Third World was formed, interaction between the African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American communities in Boston was limited and sometimes tense. In the 1970s, the African American community was the largest and probably best organized of the four communities. Despite their size, the other three communities wanted to be able to participate in Third World on equal footing with the African American community. Third World's founding members addressed this issue by forming a Board of Directors comprised of four racial caucuses, each with equal voting power.

Since Third World Jobs Clearing House is no longer in existence, I was not able witness the organization in action, or interview people while they were in the midst of it all. This also meant that it was difficult to track down the participants to put together a complete picture of what happened. However, I did have the benefit of talking to the Board and staff after they had time to reflect on their experiences and place them in the context ongoing relations between people of color in Boston. Most of the people I talked to focused on their experiences during the first three years of the organization, the period they considered to be Third World's height of success.

I asked people about why they chose to work at Third World, how the racial caucus model worked, and what the organization's successes and failures were, with a focus on its internal dynamics. Following are introductions to the people I was able to interview.

> **Pablo Calderon** was the President of Third World's Board of Directors for four years, beginning in 1976. He was the Director of Oficina Hispana when he joined the Board. Oficina Hispana was providing jobs training and placements in plumbing, electrical, carpentry and office skills. Pablo is currently Director of the Boston Job Residency Program at Economic Development & Industrial Corporation (EDIC).
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> **Gloria Fox** was a Third World Board member for eight years. At that time she was a community organizer. Gloria is currently an elected representative to the Massachusetts State House.
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> **Carmelo Iglesias** was Third World's Director of Training at its inception in 1975. He worked on and off at the Third World for a total of four years. Carmelo is currently the Executive Director of Casa del Sol, an educational program for Spanish-speaking adults in Boston.

Chuck Turner was the first Director of Third World. He helped coordinate negotiations in 1974 to integrate the trades with the U.S. Labor Department, Boston city officials, trade unions and community organizations. Prior to being selected as the Director, he had helped form Third World's Board of Directors. Chuck is currently the Director of the Center for Community Action. He is also organizing the Greater Roxbury Workers Association.

Donald Ng worked at Third World from 1976-1979. He held various positions including Jobs Counselor, Senior Counselor, Project Director, and Statewide Area Supervisor. Donald currently is a Compliance Officer at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.

This chapter presents their story of the Third World Jobs Clearing House and examines their experiences working in the racially diverse organization. They confirm the value of forming alliances across racial lines, support some of the points made in Chapters 2 and 3, and offer a few new insights. All quotes and paraphrases are from my interviews with them, except where footnoted otherwise.

History of Third World Jobs Clearing House[1]

In the early 1970s, the Boston Redevelopment Agency (BRA) was planning major construction projects in the neighborhoods where people of color lived. African American, Latino and Asian American construction workers in the South

[1] Except where noted otherwise, this section is based on my interviews with Chuck Turner on 12/13/90 and 12/19/90; and Chapter 15, "Boston Jobs for Boston People", pages 185-194, in Mel King's book, Chain of Change (1981). Mel King based Chapter 15 on a speech Chuck Turner made in 1980.

End[2], Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan and Chinatown[3] were separately demanding jobs at the new construction sites in their neighborhoods. Boston's building trade unions and contractors associations were controlled by whites who discriminated against people of color in their hiring practices.

United Community Construction Workers (UCCW) introduced the idea of forming a single organization to address the construction employment needs of all the communities of color. UCCW was a union of African American construction workers in Boston. It was formed in 1968 to organize workers around control of construction jobs and training programs in their own communities.[4] In the early 1970s, UCCW realized that some of the construction sites they wanted to work at were in the Latino and Asian American neighborhoods, and began to consider linking its job advocacy and community control efforts with organizations in these two communities. Representatives from UCCW approached leaders in the Latino, Asian American and Native American communities.

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[2] At that time, the BRA was most actively implementing "urban renewal" plans in the racially and ethnically diverse South End neighborhood. South End residents had no control over the BRA's plans. According to Pablo Calderon, community members picketed for 40 days until the BRA granted them participation in the development and construction of affordable housing. The now completed housing is known as Villa Victoria, developed by Iniquilinos Boricuas en Accion (IBA).

[3] According to Donald Ng, Asian American construction workers were demanding employment at two major projects in Chinatown: Massachusetts Turnpike Tower and Tai Tung Village.

[4] Leo Fletcher, UCCW Manifesto, 1973.

Around the same time, the U.S. Labor Department's "Boston Plan" mandated unions and contractors to take action to racially integrate the construction industry. The City of Boston had received federal funding to operate a program to meet that goal. Mayor White would only fund the union-run program if it included community involvement. The U.S. Labor Department, city officials, community leaders, contractors, and unions began to negotiate an agreement in 1974.

When negotiations broke down the following year, African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American community leaders formed an alliance. The new alliance proposed the Third World Jobs Clearing House as a program to integrate the trades, and requested funding from the City of Boston. Unions and contractors opposed the Clearing House, but failed in their attempts to have the City to deny funding. The City granted the federal funds to the new alliance in April 1975.

In the process of forming Third World, community leaders were challenged to share the new organization's internal power and control. The leaders agreed that Third World's Board of Directors would be comprised of representatives from each of the organizations involved in construction, housing or jobs development in Boston's African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American communities. However, the African American community had at least five such organizations, while the Latino and Asian American communities each had just two

organizations, and Native Americans had only one.[5] If each Board member received one vote, the African American community could control the organization by its majority.

The Latino community was concerned about folding its efforts into an organization controlled by the African American community. Latinos felt that African Americans had discriminated against them in the past, and were wary of repeated mistreatment. Some African American leaders were uncomfortable sharing power, and expressed concern about compromising their own community's interests.

> The Black organizations were split with one group of people saying that we can't afford, even within this situation, to give away power; and another group saying to let the power of the collective protect the interests of each group, rather than try to protect our own interests within that by having a numerical majority.[6]

Latino community leaders insisted Third World institute a voting structure to protect their community's interests. They suggested the Board of Directors be

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[5] The five organizations on the Board from the African American community were United Community Construction Workers (UCCW), Recruitment & Training Program (RTP), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Circle Incorporated, and Grove Hall Development Corporation. The Latino community organizations were Iniquilinos Boricuas en Accion (IBA) and Oficina Hispana. The two Asian American community organizations were Chinese American Civic Association (CACA) and Chinese Economic Development Corporation (CEDC). The Native American community's organization was the Boston Indian Council.

[6] Mel King, Chain of Change, p. 188.

structured around four racial caucuses. Each caucus, regardless of its size, would elect two representatives to the Board. This structure would give each community equal power and control of the organization. After considerable debate, this model was accepted and implemented.

When Third World Jobs Clearing House opened in September 1975, representatives from Chinese Economic Development Corporation also demanded that the organization's staff be racially diverse. Chuck Turner, who was hired as Third World's first director, and the Board of Directors understood the importance of sharing power and resources. They filled staff positions, from the Assistant Director and Training Director down through the secretaries, to reflect the organization's racial diversity.

Since its inception, relations between the Third World Jobs Clearing House and the white-controlled construction trade unions were marked by conflict. The unions opposed the City's initial funding of Third World. When it opened, the unions boycotted Third World, refusing to send it jobs. With Third World's support, workers of color formed the Third World Workers Association in December 1975. Association members demonstrated at construction sites for jobs, and attempted to shut down sites when their demands were not met. (This Association played an integral role in Third World's efforts to get job placements. In fact, most people I interviewed were not clear that it was a separate entity.)

The unions were outraged at Third World's and the Workers Association's

demands and actions. They sought to eliminate Third World. In the spring of 1976, two to three thousand union workers rallied at Boston's City Hall to demand the City Council cut its funding to Third World. Their action intimidated the Council into voting unanimously against Third World.

> The Council, as is its wont, wilted under the heat. It approved a new agreement with the Department of Labor for $7.8 million in new funding under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) with one condition attached: that no part of the funds be allocated to the Third World organization. Otherwise, the Council stipulated, its approval was null and void.[7]

Luis Sepol from the U.S. Labor Department stepped in to force the City of Boston to continue its funding. The unions continued to oppose to the Third World for the following decade.

Third World's Board members realized they needed to a comprehensive strategy and broad political support in order to continue receiving adequate funding. Their strategy was to seek state funding for two years, after which they would request funding from individual cities. They mobilized support across the state by forming satellite offices in Cambridge, Springfield, and Worcester. With the cities' support, Third World obtained discretionary funds from the State of Massachusetts.

Unfortunately, Third World lost its funding when local funds dried up in the 1980s. Pablo Calderon also notes that some people started to stray from Third

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[7] "Jobs and Minorities", Boston Globe, 11/29/76.

World's mission. There was a construction boom in Boston, and people felt the Third World had been successful at getting jobs for people of color. Some people began to focus their attention on the larger issue of community control of development. Third World closed its doors in 1985.

There is no question that the Third World Jobs Clearing House met its goal of placing workers of color in construction jobs. The Boston Globe newspaper praised Third World's job placement program in a 1976 editorial.

> It is no easy job to wring jobs from the building trades for minorities particularly when the economy is slack. Yet the Third World Jobs Clearing House has done well. Last year, for example, it contracted with Boston to place 360 workers in construction jobs. Place them it did: Hispanics, Chinese, American Indians and blacks.[8]

According to Donald Ng, the staff was committed to placing as many workers as possible, and regularly exceeded the minimum number of job placements stipulated in its funding contracts. He remembers making 300 job placements during his tenure for Asian American workers alone, even though Asians may have had the lowest percentage of job placements of all the racial groups. If it weren't for Third World, Carmelo Iglesias "strongly suspects" that workers of color wouldn't have been hired as often on construction sites, then or now.

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[8] Ibid.

Insights from the Third World Experience

Third World Board and staff members did not plan to address issues ahead of time as much as they dealt with them intuitively as they arose. They just did what they needed to do to attain their goal of placing workers of color in construction jobs. In the end, they all walked away from the experience enriched by the experience and convinced of the benefits of forming alliances across racial lines.

When it opened, Third World Jobs Clearing House was not truly an alliance. Third World's Board and staff members did share the common goal to increase the number of construction jobs for people of color, and they did come together to build a long term institution. However, not everyone started out with a pluralistic vision.

Only Chuck Turner articulated a clear vision of pluralism, in addition to goals. He decided to direct Third World because he thought it was important to meet with and strengthen the African American community, as well as the other communities of color. He also valued the opportunity to strengthen the bonds between the different communities of color.

Pablo Calderon, Gloria Fox, Carmelo Iglesias and Donald Ng did not share this vision when they initially joined Third World. Gloria Fox joined the Board of Directors because she wanted to get a fair share of jobs for the African American community. Pablo Calderon was interested in jobs training, construction

and housing. He was motivated by his beliefs that communities need to create their own institutions, and control the development in their neighborhoods. Donald Ng needed a job, and saw himself fulfilling an important role advocating for Asian American workers. Carmelo Iglesias was excited by the potentially significant economic impact of placing people of color in well paying jobs. He talks about the "economic ramifications of putting one hundred guys (from our communities) to work at ten dollars an hour." None of them mentioned a desire to forge new relations with other communities of color.

In their final evaluation, all four shifted towards the alliance perspective, where they saw their efforts contributing to a larger community of color. When asked what the benefits of Third World were, they mentioned the organization's record in jobs training and placement, but emphasized that Third World's other great achievement was racial solidarity. Gloria Fox remembers that the communities of color in Boston didn't associate with each other much at the time Third World was founded. Asian Americans and African Americans only mingled in the South End. African Americans in Roxbury and Dorchester had no contact with Asian Americans. Latinos and African Americans shared the same neighborhoods, but didn't socialize or work together. Their communications were limited and their relations strained. She says that one of the greatest benefits of Third World was that it "brought us together as a greater community of color. . . in the spirit of understanding, to understand each other and at the same time work

on a common goal." Carmelo Iglesias mentions the "benefits of unity", and says that the "sense of unity (Third World created) permeated our distinct communities." Donald Ng believes Third World was the only truly multi-cultural, multi-ethnic organization in the United States at the time. He proudly declares that it was the "first agency in the city and state where different cultures worked collectively in harmony."

There are several factors that may have contributed to their shift in perspectives. The most obvious element was their common struggle, not so much internally, but with external parties. Since it was an organization with a long-term agenda, Third World's Board and staff had to worry about their organization's survival. According to Donald Ng, the intense struggle for financial survival drew the Board and staff away from nurturing positive internal relations. At the same time, Gloria Fox believes their struggle for survival is what brought the Board of Directors closer together. She says "we struggled over issues of differences until we discovered we're not so different after all." Carmelo Iglesias says Third World hit its "zenith" of internal unity in times of crisis. He refers to two incidents, one being when "sixteen of us - Black, Asian, and Latino - were arrested together" at a construction site at Madison Park in Roxbury, the other being the construction unions' mass rally at City Hall to demand funding be withdrawn from Third World.

The racial caucus model also played a significant role in fostering good relations between the Board members from the different communities. Chuck

Turner thought the model was good at balancing out the interests of the different groups. Pablo Calderon praises the model for its fairness. He feels the caucus model was "super important" to give the Latino community "true input". He remembers his community being the focal point at Third World's Board meetings. He contrasts this to "add-on" efforts, where African Americans have invited Latinos to contribute their numbers to the struggle, but haven't offered them a share of the control or the rewards. Such "add-on" efforts invariably led to the Latino community resenting the African American community. Gloria Fox thought the racial caucus model was important, but did recommend the addition of cultural sensitivity workshops as a way to break down people's stereotypes of each other. All three agree that the model is still appropriate to use today.

There may have been some relatively minor tensions between the racial groups at the worker and staff levels. Carmelo Iglesias alludes to tensions that arose when Latinos got more job placements in certain months. He says that ultimately the job placements balanced out proportionally between the different groups. Donald Ng says the Asian workers were concerned that they were receiving fewer job placements. He also mentioned that the Asian American workers needed language tutoring. The Latino community had a bilingual program at that time. He expressed disappointment for the organization's failure to adequately support his attempts to obtain funding for a bilingual craft terminology program. Donald Ng does stress that he believes that some conflict is normal when

people of different cultures work together. He refers to the concerns he voiced as being relatively minor issues, and praises Chuck Turner and the Board of Directors for easing any conflicts between the racial groups.

The people I interviewed had a few outright criticisms of Third World. Chuck Turner thinks Third World may not have succeeded in strengthening the bonds between the Asian American community and other communities of color in Boston. He remembers there being a "clash of strategies and values". He says the Asian American organizations represented on the Board relied on the City for resources, and didn't want to antagonize Mayor White. Third World took direct actions that may have been too confrontational for the Asian American community. He recalls the Asian American caucus of the Board withdrawing after some Asian American workers participated in a demonstration, and Mayor White had denounced Third World. I was not able to reach any Asian board members to confirm this information. None of the other people I interviewed had a clear recollection of this happening.

Leo Fletcher, who was quoted in Chapters 2 and 3, says he did not feel welcome on the Board of Directors. Leo Fletcher participated on the Board as a member of the United Community Construction Workers (UCCW). He attended meetings off and on during Third World's first year of operations. He supported the Third World concept, but was critical of what he calls the organization's "acceptable" behavior. Third World did not change the structure of power in the

construction industry. Developers and unions still controlled the projects and the jobs. He calls Third World "acceptable" because it worked within this system, rather than rejecting it. He would have liked the organization to take more militant action. He quit the Board after receiving threats to himself and his family.

Carmelo Iglesias' problem with the organization was that it was always directed by an African American person. He felt that the name "Third World" meant that the leadership should have been shared equally. He guesses that a Latino might have been made Director if the Board's Latino caucus had been more aggressive.

Pablo Calderon and Carmelo Iglesias are convinced that Third World transformed people's minds about their work, their communities, and their relations with other communities of color. They believe that Third World proved to people of color that they could accomplish more together than they could alone. Pablo Calderon was impressed by the power that could be gained by organizing across racial lines. He thinks that future multi-racial organizing efforts, like those to institute Roxbury Community College and to redistrict Boston's voting precincts, were influenced by the positive experiences at Third World.

The Third World experience may have also contributed to each community's development. Third World presented an opportunity for the separate communities to pool their talents and skills, and learn from each other. Donald Ng claims that successes at Third World taught the Asian American community that it could

organize and successfully negotiate its demands with people outside of Chinatown, namely city officials and developers. The African American community had a history of taking similar types of action, and continued to promote them at Third World. Most likely, the Asian American community learned these lessons at Third World from working side-by-side with members of the African American community.

The largely positive evaluation of the Third World Jobs Clearing House confirms the value of alliances. The alliance of all four communities of color magnified Third World's power over the long term. Their collective exercise of power had an impact on all construction workers in Boston. This is evident in affirmative action construction hiring policies, like the Boston Jobs policy, and in increased levels of monitoring for contract compliance. The alliance also contributed to the development of each community, and to the development of the vision of a larger community of color. Everyone I talked to walked away from Third World with a clearer idea of the possibilities and benefits of communities of color working together across racial lines.

A Closer Look at the Racial Caucus Model

I began my research thinking that the racial caucus model was the most unique and intriguing aspect of Third World's alliance. I had hoped to discover

that it was a formula for success that could be applied to other alliances. I was surprised to find that it was not really the most important piece of the alliance. I think Chuck Turner is correct in saying that the real key was commitment -- commitment to the goal, and commitment to reaching the goal by forming an alliance across racial lines. I would add two more keys: honesty and self-respect.

I was originally intrigued by the caucus model because it manages to incorporate a recognition that each of our communities of color is distinct at the same time that it unifies us into a larger, pluralistic community of color. The four caucus model is a departure from the Anglo Saxon practice of lumping us together under the category of "minority". Leo Fletcher and Pablo Calderon remind me that "minority" does not recognize our individual contributions, our different histories and cultures, or our relations to each other. The caucus model successfully brought the African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American communities together as one without ignoring these differences, or our complex relations to each other.

Now I'm beginning to think the process of creating the model was more important than the model itself. In proposing the caucus model, the Latino community leaders forced issues of equity and control on to the table. They did not trust African American community leaders to protect the Latino community's interests. They acknowledged the mistrust and tension, and decided to tackle the issues honestly, directly and constructively.

Their bold action also required self-respect. The Latino community leaders knew their community was smaller and less organized than the African American community. They didn't believe this meant that they deserved to be taken advantage of. The model they proposed implied that each racial community deserved equal power and control over the organization because each community is equally important.

The Latino community leaders forced the African American community leaders to debate their principles of democracy. Although both communities valued democracy, they struggled over the specific definition of the term. Did equal participation mean each individual, each organization, or each community received equal voting power? Finally they agreed on the model that emphasizes communities over organizations and individuals. Mel King reminds me that Third World's racial caucus model is similar to the United States Senate, where each state in the union receives two votes.

The process of accepting the model truly tested the African American community's leaders commitment to achieving their goal. When the caucus model was proposed, the African American community leaders could have walked away. Instead they seriously considered and debated the proposed model, realizing that they had to consider issues of equity and control if they really wanted to open a hiring hall with other communities of color. They recognized their success depended on the strength of their alliance with the other communities of color. In

debating and finally approving the model, they made a real commitment to working together.

Even before Third World had opened its doors for business, the founding members had set the tone for internal relations. In proposing and accepting the caucus model, the Latino and African American community leaders had made a real commitment to their goal, as well as to each other. From a basis of self-respect and honest dialogue, they had begun to struggle with each other, to define their common values, and to address issues of equity and control. They had agreed to share control of the Board, and later remained conscious of these issues of equity and control when they distributed the rewards of their efforts: the paid staff positions and job placements.

Clarifying the Definition of Alliance

After interviewing Board and staff members of the Third World Jobs Clearing House, I have five clarifications to the definition of alliances presented in Chapter 3. First, the primary reason people form alliances is to achieve goals they could not reach alone. This reason is the same as that for coalitions. The main difference between alliances and coalitions in their initial stages is that alliances are formed around long-term goals, particularly around building alternative institutions, while coalitions are formed to take immediate, short-term action, usually political

action.

Second, I have come to realize that allies need not start out with a pluralistic vision. Through common struggle, allies can work out issues, develop understanding, and collectively move towards developing a pluralistic vision. In Chapter 3, Mel King, May Louie and Papusa Molina highlighted the importance of internal struggle. Internal struggle can include consciously breaking down stereotypes through mutual education, or simply working out people's disagreements. The Third World experience proves that external struggles are an equally important part of the process of developing vision. Third World Board and staff members did not consciously seek to break down stereotypes and develop racial sensitivity. Instead, external crisis brought them closer by forcing them to find constructive ways to survive together. In the end, through common struggle, they developed a pluralistic organization and vision.

Third, alliances are built on a foundation of self-respect, honesty, and commitment. Common principles like diversity, democracy and personal freedom are not enough to ensure good relations. Individuals and communities need enough self-respect to realize that they are as deserving as their allies, and to demand they be treated equally. They need to be honest about acknowledging any past conflict, and to directly and constructively address the issues that have caused tension. They need to be so committed to their goal that they are willing to work out their differences. These three values -- self-respect, honesty and commitment -- set the

tone for positive relations, and are best practiced from the inception the alliance.

Fourth, alliances provide opportunities for communities of color to learn from each other and grow together. Communities can teach each other skills and strategies for action and development. Each separate community can employ these lessons and tools to further develop itself. By acting in solidarity, communities of color learn they can unite to gain collective power, and develop as a larger community of color.

Fifth, one of the greatest challenges for allies is to figure out how to constructively address internal criticism to embrace a broader range of perspectives. The Third World alliance was unprecedented in bringing communities of color together in ways that included and valued each of them. However, not all the differences between communities and individuals in the alliance were worked out, and important people ended up marginalized. Third World's actions were too confrontational for the Asian American caucus of the Board, and too accomodationist for Leo Fletcher. Carmelo Iglesias criticized the Board for always hiring an African American director. Third World did not completely embrace diversity and pluralism. Instead of silencing, ignoring or rejecting some of the internal criticism, allies must learn to address issues directly.

Chapter 5

THE POWER OF ALLIANCE

Alliances are not just an ideal -- they are real opportunities for people of color to cross racial lines and build pluralistic institutions. They are a strategy for people of color to achieve long-term goals they would have difficulty reaching alone. They replace the self-defeating practice of battling each other over a limited number of resources. They institutionalize diversity by including and valuing a broad range of cultures, experiences, and perspectives.

Alliances have certain basic elements. First, as a prerequisite, each community in an alliance must have achieved some measure of self-determination. Through education and grassroots organizing, each community of color can develop pride in its identity, consolidate its resources and power, and define its interests and goals. Each community must go through these stages of development separately before advancing to pluralism. Communities who neglect to do so will have difficulty benefitting from alliances, and risk being taken advantage of.

Alliances are founded on long-term goals, as well as principles. People of color in alliances talk about principles like diversity, democracy, equality, and personal freedom. Allies believe that each of our communities is different, and that these differences need to be celebrated and incorporated, rather than disregarded

or minimized. They say that if each of us truly seeks freedom from oppression, we have to want it and create it for us all. They believe that each of our communities is equally important, and so deserve equal control and power.

Enduring alliances are developed through commitment, respect for self and others, and honest and direct communication. Allies must be so committed to their goal that they are willing to struggle through their differences to reach it. In order for their struggle to be fair and productive, allies must respect themselves and each other, honestly acknowledge any past conflicts between them, and directly and constructively deal with the issues that divide them. These values and practices set a positive tone for internal interactions and the inevitable struggles ahead.

Allies develop a collective vision of pluralism through a process of internal and external struggle. Struggle brings allies closer, whether it is struggle to understand each other or struggle to survive together. Internal struggles for understanding can range from conscious efforts to break down stereotypes through mutual education to constructively working out people's disagreements. Struggles for survival against external forces brings allies together in times of crisis, forcing them to find constructive ways to work together. When successful, either type of struggle can result in allies increasing their respect and understanding of each other. In the process, they find ways to incorporate diversity into their organization, and develop a pluralistic vision for the future.

Allies face the difficult task of incorporating a broad range of perspectives.

Allies must find ways to include and value each person's and each community's perspectives in the process of working through their differences. This means consciously and constructively listening for and addressing internal differences of opinion, rather than silencing, ignoring or rejecting such criticisms. A pluralistic alliance celebrates and incorporates each person's and each community's perspectives, as well as their diverse cultures, histories and experiences.

Alliances are an uplifting and transformative experience. By working together, people and communities of color learn from each other at the same time they grow together. Alliances demonstrate the power to be gained from working together across racial lines. Each community contributes its skills and experience to the alliance. Alliances also present opportunities for communities of color to learn strategies for development and change from each other. With the newly acquired knowledge and skills, each community can develop itself, as well as the pluralistic institutions created by the alliance.

Alliances may be a relatively new strategy for community development. In Chapter 3, I speculated that the concept of alliances may have emerged out of the coalitions of the sixties. Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton cautioned against forming coalitions with individuals and groups who had conflicting principles and vision. Around this time, communities of color were also moving through the stages of development that Mel King describes: from demanding services, to developing the skills to serve themselves in the existing

institutions, to building their own alternative community-based, community-designed institutions. The alliances that Mel King, May Louie, and Papusa Molina describe incorporate the capacity to build institutions with the concept of uniting around goals, principles, and vision.

Coalitions are still necessary. They are useful to achieve short-term goals, where we are pushing to change existing institutions rather than attempting to build our own collective institutions. Psychologically, coalitions may also be required as an interim step to alliances. They are temporary opportunities for people of color who are wary of each other to come together in constructive ways, and to learn the value of working together. But in the end, coalitions are not about creating a pluralistic alternative to existing exclusive institutions.

Alliances are an exciting and viable strategy for community development. They are about struggle in our minds, about transformation, about learning to see ourselves and our neighbors in relation to each other. They require commitment and struggle, but no cash. They are a vital strategy for communities of color to maximize their power and create their own pluralistic institutions. For these reasons, alliances are feasible and even more necessary in times of economic hardship, when communities of color have even fewer economic, educational and employment opportunities, and the tensions between us escalate ever higher. We can hardly afford not to form these alliances.

Papusa Molina: Like the words of the old Lennon song, "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one." If I didn't believe that it is possible, I could not wake up every morning and face living in a country which practices oppression at every level, a country where internal and external colonizations follow the same patterns but al fin y al cabo, a country where multicultural society is an unavoidable reality. (page 329)

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